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CRITICAL NOTES

THE READING OF SCRIPTURE IN THE CHURCH IN THE SECOND CENTURY

Christianity did not start out as a new religion without predecessor, antecedents, or presuppositions. It was not possible in the earliest gatherings of Christians for the purpose of worshipping God, to avoid a connection with the services in the Jewish synagogues. The forms of the synagogue were for the Jew who had become a Christian, and who at first as a Christian also remained a Jew, the only forms of worship known, saving always the temple services which were not transferable to other places of worship. The necessary consequence must have been that the earliest assemblies of Christians adopted as nearly as circumstances permitted the forms of synagogue services. In the synagogue the reading of the Old Testament held, if I mistake not, the chief place. That was the part of the services in which God spoke to man. This is often too much overlooked in studying the worship of the early Christians.

Given then this continuation of accustomed forms in passing from Judaism to Christianity I think it is necessary further to emphasize the likelihood that the same forms were observed in gentile Christian churches. For the gentile Christians had in some cases been Jewish proselytes, and in some cases may have gone as Christians to the synagogue which was open to all. At any rate the apostles, the itinerant preachers, or missionaries who converted them would have handed on to them the forms to which they were themselves accustomed.

The services of the first Christians were then doubtless in an eminent sense services of the word, thoroughly in the sense of the reformers of the sixteenth century. The almost inevitable result of the succession to the synagogue must have been the determining of the Scripture passages to be read in the same way as they had been determined in the synagogue. So far as the sections of the law and the prophets were fixed in the synagogue, and so far as the various Christian communities had the necessary rolls at command, the churches probably read the same lessons. There was nothing to suggest anything else to them. The messianic portions of prophecy were not less cherished by the Jews than by the Christians.

Paul Glaue habilitated last year, that is to say became Privatdozent for theology in the University of Giessen, and chose for his theme this

subject.¹ He discusses the reading of Scripture in the synagogue up to the time of Jesus, and then in the Christian churches of the apostolic and sub-apostolic ages in Rome about 150 A.D., and the statements about the reading until the rise of the Old Catholic church. Before leaving the question of the reading in the synagogue, the author tells us (p. 11, note) how Jesus studied the Scriptures. If he had not some private source of information of which I have never heard, he should have put these statements down with more reserve. On the other hand he thinks it necessary to prove that Jesus presupposed for the Jews, and the apostles, especially Paul, for their hearers and readers a knowledge of the Old Testament, which is scarcely necessary. Passing to the apostolic age, we find on p. 17, note 23, a very good remark upon the preaching of the earliest apostles as undoubtedly echoed in the Gospel of Matthew with the: "Thus was fulfilled," "Thus it was written," inasmuch as the reference to the Old Testament was the only way to prove for the Jews the messiahship of Jesus.

Strangely enough the author finds it likely that the apostles could not read the Scriptures (p. 18). And that in spite of the fact that he has told us (p. 4, note 6) how often the Jewish boys learned to read, and in the face of his positive statements as to how Jesus studied the Scriptures. He shows on that very page that the children in large towns and the children of parents who had more money were often taught, and yet he seems to forget that the disciples were apparently largely from Capernaum and that at least some of them were not of the poorest class but had their hired servants. So far as we can see, it would be more probable that they should learn to read them than that Jesus, in despised Nazareth, should. Jesus learned to read, therefore they probably learned also. Paul calls himself, not indeed *ἀγράμματος*, but still *ιδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ* (II Cor. 11:6) and yet the author urges this very word *ιδιώτης* in Acts 4:13 against the disciples' ability to read.

On p. 20, note 25, the author says that Jonah was read by Christians in the fifth century on the Wednesday before Easter; he will find Jonah at a later date in the Greek church read on the eve of Easter, which seems to be a more appropriate time; I have noted it in manuscripts. It may be well to add that the lesson from Joel that the author cites from Horne's *Introduction*, as used by the Karaite Jews in the Crimea at Whitsuntide, is also used and has long been used by the Greek church on the eve of Whitsunday; I noted it a year or so ago in a manuscript of the year

¹ Paul Glaue, *Die Vorlesung heiliger Schriften im Gottesdienste*. I. Teil. Bis zur Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche. Berlin: Alexander Duncker, 1907. v+86 pages. M. 2.

1071. If I am not mistaken the author is too much inclined to limit the Christian services in which the Scriptures were read to Sunday. He refers directly here (p. 21; cf. pp. 82, 83) to the example of the synagogue, but seems to forget that he has on p. 8 and elsewhere shown that the Jews also read the Scriptures on other days than their Sabbath, our Saturday. From what source the author learns that the man in whose house the Christians met was usually the leader of the meetings, as he tells us on p. 22, is not clear to me; and as little do I know how he has learned that at this early date, in the apostolic age, the Christians hired or built larger halls for their meetings, or whence he draws his information about a confirmation of a leader by the founder of the church, and about the "pater ecclesiae." We may conjecture various things of that kind, but it is scarcely prudent to put them down as facts until we have the proofs in our hands. The assumption that in I Cor. 14:26 the psalm was one of the man's own composition, and this too where "everybody," "each," brought a psalm, seems to me to be less likely than that it was a self-chosen psalm, one of the many Old Testament psalms, but we really do not know.

The author's knowledge of the fine distinction between the *λόγος γνώσεως* which is "the utterance of insight into God's essence and the internal divine relations, as it is effected and brought to view in the speaker by inspiration," and the *λόγος σοφίας* which is "the announcement of the wise and divinely arranged course of the world and of human fate as the divine revelation makes it known to us in the holy Scriptures,"—this distinction put down as a definite fact strikes one, to say the least, as odd. On pp. 25 and 26 the author labors again, I think for the third time, to prove that the Scriptures really were read in the Christian assemblies. It does not seem to me that Jacoby's and Seyerlen's constructions deserve so much attention as this. On the other hand, however, the author seems to me to have an incorrect conception of the probabilities touching the reading of Paul's epistles, p. 29. He seems to have been led to this view, i.e., to the supposition that these epistles were, so long as Paul lived, read only once, or at most a couple of times on special occasions, by the consideration which he brings on p. 30, that Paul did not intend to have them regarded as of equal value with the lessons from the Old Testament. Yet the author knows very well and treats several times of the different points of view under which writings could come to be read in a Christian meeting. This is again a matter which would have been clearer and more effective if it had been presented by the author once for all, fully, in the right place, and not merely touched here and there in a straggling way. I agree with the author that the Christians probably read the Old Testament at first just as

the Jews did, but I think that he does not bring this point out quite as distinctly or hold to it quite as firmly as he might.

Passing to the subapostolic period and observing that I still am inclined to adhere to the earlier dating of the Revelation, I think that the author presses too much the reading of the lessons in the synagogue by several persons as a contrast to the reader mentioned in Rev. 1:3. In many a small synagogue it is likely that only one person will have been able to read, so that a certain preparation for a reader as a standing official is to be looked for. Yet it is to be emphasized in the contrary direction that, as the author says, the words "the one reading," in Rev. 1:3, do not by any strict necessity compel the office of a reader. The reader may be a single official. But the reading is in any case a reading by a single person. One reads, many hear. Two do not read at once. That may be all that we are to find in this sentence: some one reading, others hearing. The author is perfectly right (p. 37) in opposing Jacoby's view that in I Tim. 4:13 the reading was something new in public worship. But there is no need today of dating the epistles to Timothy and Titus late, for Harnack's chronology of Paul leaves time for them during his life. In consequence it does not seem at all possible to suppose with the author (p. 38) that I Timothy can count any book of the New Testament a part of sacred Scripture.

It would perhaps be better (p. 40) to bring in the reading of the epistles before the reading of the gospels and to place the reading of the gospels at the first as desirable from the point of view that they replaced the gospel by word of mouth. The words of the author imply that without the gospels the Christians only had prophecy, the Old Testament lessons, without fulfilment, whereas they had had, in the living preaching, the fulfilment from the first. The reading of the gospels came in, not to bring for the first time the good news of fulfilment, but to replace the more vivid personal oral announcement of that fulfilment. We should not forget that at first the change was not to be thought of as a very welcome one. The speaker who narrated with the fulness of an evangelist must have seemed much more varied, much more attractive than one who read a brief statement. The wandering preacher was gospel and commentary fused into one.

On p. 41 the reference to papyrus as dear, should be accompanied by the statement that it was the cheap writing material of that day. The description of the way in which books were circulated is not incorrect, although the author appears to presuppose more critical judgment than was in general then to be looked for. My impression is that the churches in those days usually knew very well what they got and how

good it was, but that they were not in a position to have exercised any very great skill in sifting bad from good, had there been great quantities of bad books to attract their attention. On p. 43 the author reaches the thought that the new books replaced the sermon, but he should have given this far earlier. Moreover, he should have distinguished between the sermon as a discussion of an Old Testament text, after the manner of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, or let us say after the custom of today, and the sermon as a gospel, as the living story about Jesus, which has just been mentioned.

In connection with the references to Paul's letters and their acceptance in the church of the second century the author says, on p. 47, that "the position of the growing catholic church over against Paul was by no means a friendly one." That sentence seems to me to be a complete reversal of the facts. There are perhaps one or two authors during the second century who, in the writings that we possess from them, do not refer especially to Paul. But as a rule, from first to last, from Clement of Rome to Irenaeus of Smyrna and Lyons, Paul is the great hold of the Christian churches and the Christian writers. It is true that Marcion liked Paul, but that did not make the church dislike him. Marcion liked and kept the Gospel of Luke. The church did not therefore reject the Gospel of Luke. The heretics used the books of the New Testament because there was nothing else to use, that is to say nothing else normative and of authority to which they could turn. If they made books for themselves, or even concocted gospels of their systems, they based these on the books of the New Testament and did not, so far as can be seen, put their own books in the place of these churchly books. To say that the church was unfriendly to Paul because the heretics were friendly to him and because his advice was "often unintelligible, uncomfortable, and disagreeable" to the rising churches, seems to me to be totally wrong. Paul is and remains for them *the* apostle and they turn to him and his "uncomfortable" books at every moment. The author takes up (p. 48) Clement of Rome, Hermas, the letter of Pliny, and the Teaching of the apostles, even though he says himself that neither Hermas, Pliny, nor the Didache says anything about the reading. But all these belong in the next division of the book, in which the reading of the Scripture in Rome in the year 150 is treated of. The author has apparently not thought over the plan of his discussion beforehand, but has written hit or miss as the points occurred to him.

I do not think that it is right to suppose (p. 49) that Clement's letter was in Corinth put upon the same level as the Old Testament lessons or as the letters of Paul in being read in church. The author refers thereby to the

Codex Alexandrinus, but he should observe that if Clement were to be placed in the series of the New Testament books it should have its position with the letters of the New Testament and not be tacked on after the Revelation. The copying of certain books in the manuscripts of the Bible may well have been for convenience, because they were often read in church, and need not be regarded as a sign that they were held in precisely so high esteem as the books of the New Testament. The author opposes (p. 52, note 65) unnecessarily Probst's application of the beautiful sentence in the letter to Diognetus to the reading in church. The sentence does not say "reading," but it is based upon the fact of law, prophets, gospels, and apostles' tradition being read. The sentence does not speak of worship, yet it is based upon worship.

On pp. 57-62 the author discusses the number of Christians at Rome in the year 150. He thinks there were probably 4,000 and that they were divided into five or six groups for Sunday services, and he places the probable officers before us. Although much in this is mere hypothesis, it is suggestive and may lead to the observation of trifling phrases that will make some points clearer. It cannot for a moment be conceded (p. 63) that Justin Martyr, who had spent so much time in different places, and who was as we know a questioner, and who knew personally so many Christians from many widely separated districts, did not know what the usages in other churches were. On p. 65 the author assumes, I think without reason, that Justin's *Memoirs* included a gospel that is not among our four gospels, and he does not even feel sure that Justin had the Fourth Gospel in his *Memoirs*. The *ŋ*, the "or" in Justin's sentence that they read the *Memoirs* or the Prophets is not to be pressed; the author says himself (p. 67) that the sentence is inexact. He is right in counting the Law as here included under the word Prophets. The question as to when the lessons were defined is not yet settled. The author will perhaps tell us more about it in his continuation. The description of the settling of the canon (p. 84) appears to me to be rather more detailed and certain than the sources would permit it to be. On the whole this book is useful as a brief summing up of the literature upon the question. May the author in the next parts give us a more orderly and a less dogmatical view of the field.

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